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*Prescribes stronger medicine
for the foregoing ailment.*

BETTER AN OFFICE OF SOVIETOLOGY

John Whitman

It is very good that Mr. Shryock has opened a discussion of the methods of sovietology; the debate is overdue, and we are in his debt. To my mind he exaggerates, here and there, the devotion with which individual analysts cling to one methodology, forsaking all others, but as a generalization his diagnosis can stand as a fair statement of what's wrong and ought to be set right.

I am surprised, however, that an intelligence officer of Mr. Shryock's experience could bring himself to endorse, as even a partial solution, an ad hoc working group. A task force by any other name smells not one whiff better. Such a body, as anyone knows, is nothing but a floating crap game from which anyone can return and tell his boss that he won (or that the dice were loaded). An ad hoc working group produces no papers, and its chairman writes no fitness reports.

The national estimating process contributes even less to the synthesis of methods and insights for which Mr. Shryock calls. While the drafters of an NIE may be partial to one or another of Mr. Shryock's schools, they perform little sustained research of their own and are in principle eclectic. Their estimate is produced with little participation by the multifarious units of sovietologists tucked away in various parts of the community. While any of these schools may get its views presented in a contribution to the estimate, in practice it has little chance to argue them during the drafting.

There is much merit in Mr. Shryock's new suggestion that a journal of sovietology be founded, drawing on governmental and academic analysts alike. The field is small, its practitioners are scattered, and they need a medium of communication which would organize polemics and help set standards in an area of investigation that is still relatively young. Such a journal could also be a bazaar where analysts could trade with each other not only questions which have no answers but answers which have no questions (as on Kirilenko). The need

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is for a highly specialized, highly professional publication—something only a sovietologist would read—and it is unlikely to be met by private initiative, if only because more than half the talent is in the intelligence community. And by making the field respectable it might help solve the problem of where the next generation of sovietologists is to come from.

But let us focus now on the most pregnant passage in Mr. Shryock's essay: "...there should be a variety of schools, or sub-schools, which ride with the assigned function, not with the individual." The development of this thought may lead us to the fundamental difficulty and suggest its cure.

Isn't it clear that the multiplicity of schools arises directly from the multiplicity of assigned functions? If you sit a man down at a desk and tell him he is responsible for culling and translating gems from the Soviet press, don't be surprised if his analyses, and therefore his selections, take no account of the relative postures of the United States and the USSR in strategic attack forces. If you sit another man down at a desk somewhere else and tell him to keep books on the assignments and associations of Kirilenko, don't be surprised if he can't tell you whether the esoteric content of Kirilenko's speeches suggests revisionist or dogmatic proclivities. Create two offices for current reporting, tell one that it is responsible for exploiting radio and press and the other that its primary concern is "everything else" (whatever that is), and you can almost take it for granted that the resulting rivalry will not be a fruitful one.

In CIA, as a glance at the Agency's organization shows, the economic, scientific, and some other fields are legitimate subjects for research, but politics is not. Under the existing ground rules Soviet politics can be treated in CIA only as an aspect—an important one, but still one aspect—of the processing of foreign documents and broadcasts, of the production of biographic information, of the publication of current intelligence, etc.

Mr. Shryock is right that all schools are needed. But I fear that they will continue to work at cross purposes so long as they remain in different bureaucracies rather than being united in a single organizational framework devoted to exploiting all methodologies for a single aim—the analysis of Soviet politics as a research problem.

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